

Brixton Parish Council

Community Engagement Policy & Strategy



Introduction

Brixton Parish Council recognises the importance for local people, groups and communities to have a voice in contributing to the debate and decisions affecting the Parish Council on global and national issues, climate change, reduction of fossil fuels and more recently the plans for the new town of Sherford within the Parish.

Community engagement by Brixton Parish Council is important as

- All people living within the geographical boundary of Brixton Parish should be informed about and involved in decisions made by the Council which affect them.
- All people within Brixton community deserve high quality public services, shaped around their needs
- Parish Council activities should reflect local priorities, requirements and aspirations.

Policy

This **Community Engagement Policy** recognises the diversity of our Parish and the importance of the need to provide appropriate opportunities for local people, organisations and communities to participate at whatever level they wish to influence service delivery, decision making and policy development of the Parish Council.

Community Engagement supports the Parish Council's views of Brixton as:

- A parish that protects the integrity of the outstandingly beautiful environment in which it is situated and at the same time recognises the need to consider and embrace the issues and pressures of the 21st Century
- A community continuing to improve the living standards locally for all residents;
- A community that enjoys a safe, secure and healthy way of life;
- A caring community that provides for all its age groups;
- A community that takes every opportunity to help itself and adopts new activities and approaches to sustain the economic viability of the area;
- A community which plans for the long term future and well being of all local residents;
- A community where individuals and groups/communities are able to contribute to and influence service development and delivery;
- A community which respects the diversity of its population.

Brixton Parish Council's policy objectives for Community Engagement are to:

- fulfil its legal duty not to discriminate as laid out in the Equality Act 2010 and will challenge discrimination, victimisation and harassment wherever it finds it. It is committed to **recognising and promoting actively equality and diversity** in our parish.
- **coordinate, develop and sustain opportunities** for all local people and groups to influence what happens in their community;
- provide opportunities for communities to **shape and influence** the development and delivery of quality services and policies that reflect local needs and priorities;
- ensure that **those most directly affected** by plans and decisions are aware of opportunities for community engagement;
- ensure that **community engagement activities are voluntary**, and that participants can withdraw at any time;
- ensure that **information** obtained from community engagement activities is **honestly interpreted**;
- ensure that the **rights and dignity of all participants are valued and respected** at all times;
- give **careful consideration to activities, information and questions** to ensure that they do not offend, cause distress or embarrassment;
- **bring people together** to identify common concerns and respect the contribution of each participant;
- **manage and coordinate** engagement activities to ensure consistency, quality and partner participation to avoid duplication and consultation fatigue;
- **provide opportunities and equal access** for participation for all sections of the community, particularly people and groups who find it difficult to voice their views;
- **ensure feedback** is given to participants and the community about the outcomes of consultation and engagement giving reasons if unable to deliver on expectations;
- **provide a range of opportunities** in community engagement activities;
- **ensure awareness of confidentiality** issues in community engagement activities, with particular regard to the Freedom of Information Act (Confidentiality issues will be adhered to, within the constraints of legislation);
- **meet the requirements** of the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR);
- **engage with key stakeholders** and/or representative groups in advance of specific community engagement activities – to provide advance warning and to seek views on the most effective means of publicity;
- **receive feedback to listen and learn** from our own and others' experience;
- **welcome thoughts, ideas, concerns and criticisms** by phone, email or letter from all residents, second home owners, visitors and partners. The Parish Council will respond to each contact.

Strategy to deliver the Community Engagement Policy and Objectives

The Parish Councillors and the Parish Clerk will be responsible for the effective management, governance and delivery of community engagement activities in the decision making of the Parish Council. The objectives will be reviewed annually by the Parish Council, when consideration will be given to any feedback from local people and partners on the effectiveness of community engagement in Brixton Parish.

i. Communication and Information

Brixton Parish Council recognises the importance of providing effective information through a variety of communication methods to all local residents.

Currently in place

- Contact details and photographs of all the Parish Councillors are published on the Parish Council website www.brixtonparishcouncil.org.uk;
- Notices of the dates and times of all Parish Council meetings are published on the Parish Council and village website and on community notice boards;
- Minutes and reports of the monthly Parish Council meetings are available on the Parish Council website;
- Paper copies of the minutes of the monthly Parish Council meetings and reports are published on the village notice board;
- Minutes of Parish Council meetings and specific communications are published in the *Brixton Magazine* (monthly) ;
- An Open Forum is available at all Parish Council meetings where the public can raise issues with the Parish Council (see appendix one – Guide to Participation)
- Attendance and feedback from District and County Councillors
- Regular liaison with local Police Sergeant by the Chair of the Parish Council
- Information provided at meetings and in the minutes and distributed as appropriate i.e. through the Brixton Village Magazine or on the *I love Brixton Face* book page
- Representation by Parish Councillors on a variety of outside bodies feeding back to Parish Council meetings; e.g. The Brixton Feoffee Trust, The Hele Trust
- Direct contact with Parish Councillors and the Clerk to the Parish Council from individuals/groups/partners;
- Site visits by Parish Councillors are arranged by appointment with the applicants; for complex/ planning applications the public are invited to attend.
- An Annual Parish Report
- A quarterly parish newsletter is produced, displayed on the website and distributed to various locations in the parish.
- An Annual Parish Meeting is held which is topic based with a speaker or reports from local organisations;
- Setting up opportunities for residents to meet Parish Councillors informally and contribute to working groups i.e. Neighbourhood Plan Group, Traffic Management Working Group, Community Emergency Plan group, Brixton Parish Environment Working Group
- The use of new technology to communicate with residents - regular contributions of information - the *I love Brixton* Facebook page, Brixton Village Facebook page and The App

ii. Consultation and Engagement

Brixton Parish Council recognises that it is important to hear the views of local people on matters affecting the Parish and will welcome feedback to improve consultation processes. It will

- Ensure that any issues which have a significant impact on the Parish/community and for individuals/groups will be the subject of public consultation;
- Use a variety of different options to collect views and opinions of all local people, groups and partners in the Parish e.g. questionnaires, ballot, information sessions, consultation events, specific meeting (not Parish Council meetings) with a speaker and topic and evaluate their effectiveness by receiving feedback from participants;
- Identify and invite local interested people with the skills and expertise to meet with Parish Councillors and others on time limited, topic based working groups e.g. Neighbourhood Plan Group, Community Emergency Plan Group, Brixton Parish Environment Working Group
- Work closely in partnership with other agencies e.g. the Schools, Police, South Hams District Council and Devon County Council;
- Work closely with our neighbouring Parish Councils on issues which affect more than one Parish;
- Work in collaboration with the River Yealm Harbour Authority and Yealm Estuary Management Group.

Policy adopted by Brixton Parish Council – 25th July 2018

Updated by Brixton Parish Council – 31st July 2019, 24th June 2020 , 29th September 2021 , 28th September 2022 and 27th September 2023

Kirstie Aldridge, Clerk to Brixton Parish Council



Attending Meetings of Brixton Parish Council (Appendix 1 to Brixton Parish Council Community Engagement Strategy)

• **Attending a Meeting (in person or virtually via zoom)**

Members of the public are more than welcome to attend the whole or part of any meeting of the Parish Council. However, should a matter of a confidential nature be included on the agenda of any meeting then members of the public will be asked to leave the meeting whilst that item is being discussed.

• **When are meetings held?**

Parish Council meetings are held at 7.00 p.m. on the last Wednesday in each month except in August when no meeting is held (and avoiding school holidays)

• **Can I speak at meetings?**

At the monthly Parish Council meeting a public participation (open forum) session is clearly identified on the agenda and takes place at the beginning of the meeting. The time allowed for public participation is 30 minutes. If the subject of your point is in connection with an item on the order of business it will be taken into account when that item is discussed later in the meeting. If it is about another matter the Chairman will advise when it will be considered.

• **What happens after I have spoken**

You may not participate further in the deliberations of Council at that meeting. However, you will be more than welcome to stay and listen to the debate that ensues either at the meeting or to attend any future meeting.

• **May I speak in support of my own planning application?**

In the open forum you may speak in support of or in objection to any application on the agenda at the meeting and your comments will be considered.

• **What is the Parish Councils role in planning?**

South Hams District Council consults with the Parish Council on all planning applications for the parish. The role of the Parish Council in planning is to consider the application and where necessary make a site visit before making a recommendation to the South Hams District Council.

• **Agenda and Minutes**

All agendas and minutes of Parish Council Meetings are posted on the notice board in Brixton village and are published on the parish council website brixtonparishcouncil.org.uk and the village website www.brixtondevon.co.uk. A copy the minutes of Parish Council meetings is also printed in the 'Brixton Magazine'

Contact your Parish Council via the Clerk

Kirstie Aldridge clerk@brixtonparishcouncil.org.uk or by phone on 07890 945785

Your Parish Councillors

Chairman	Liz Hitchins
Vice Chairman	Michael Wills
Planning Chairman	Ian Martin
	Terry Clegg
	Stuart Nix
	Neil Hawken
	Rachael Gillard